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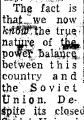
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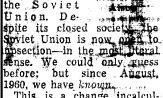
Matter of Fact By Joseph Alsop

A Debt Is Owed

IN THE LAST three years, the true shape of the world we live in has been radically changed by a new fact, which

very few peo-ple knnw. about even to day.





This is a change incalculably profound and far reaching. It is also an incalculable gain, for the United States. and this needs to be pointed. ont now because the man to whom this change, and gain are largely owed is now leaving the public service, un-celebrated, infewarded, al-most unthanked.

IF ANY MEMBER of the

general public recalls the name of Richard M. Bissell, it will probably be because of the Bay of Pigs. Before that fiasco. Bissell was due with the U-2.
to succeed Allen Dulles as BECAUSE the intervals beDirector of the Central Intel-tween U-2 flights were un-

took the rap.

Another job followed—a fairly big job, but one that is now ending for reasons that are not especially relevant. All that is relevant, at the moment, is to record just how the closed Soviet society ceased to be closed for all practical purposes.

THIS remarkable story began in the summer of 1954 when one of President Eisenhower's numerous special ad-

visory committees, the Killian committee on surprise attack, suggested building a reconnaissance plane of the type of the U-2. Such a plane had already been proposed to the Air Force by the brilfiant Kelly Johnson of Lockheed Aviation, but the idea had been turned down flat.

By the intricate, half-accidental processes familiar in Government, the Killian committee recommendation brought together a three-star team, composed of Kelly Johnson, the famous E. H. Land of the Polaroid Co., and Bissell from the CIA, who was the friend of both the others.

In record time, these three bulled the U-2 through from concept to reality. The strange new aircraft was thereupon assigned to the CIA. Bissell thus became com-mander of an independent U-2 air force, in addition to his other duties.

So much is fairly well known to informed persons. What is not well known (and would not be discused in this space if the main facts had not already been published elsewhere) is the second chapter of the story that opened with the U-2.

ligence Agency. But some avoidably long, and for other one had to take the rap for this sort, failure, for which everyhoody from President Kennedy on down had a share of blame; and Bissell was chief among those who really replace guesses about the Soviet Union with true the Soviet Union with true knowledge.

Yet the new plane's success was very great, all the same. And this success in turn directed attention to the reconnaissance satellite project previously initiated by the Air Force Research and Development Command.

From this public project, until then rather languidly prosecuted, a chunk was quick strictly classified, but vate life."

out secret effort to build a workable reconnaissance satellite began.

This time Lt. Gen. Bernard Schriever of the Research and Development Command worked with Bissell. Brig. Gen. Oswald Ritland was Bissell's day-to-day partner, "Din' Land again lent a hand. And others might be mentioned.

Yet in the official Air Force account of this matter, the main credit for the success of the reconnaissance satellite is nonetheless given to Bissell. August, 1960, when the first of the new "birds" with seeing, remembering eyes made its successful flight, is a date that will be remembered in history books.

IT IS A DATE with much bearing, to begin with, on the silly controversy about the missile gap. Until we knew the Soviets had not de ploxed the intercontinental ballistic missiles that they were entirely capable of producing, the only safe course was to assume that the So viets were indeed producing and deploying those ulti-mate weapons. Their failure to do so was in fact a gigantic error.

But after August, 1960, we began to know that the ICBMs were not there; and this in turn changed the entire strategic aspect of the world by the time President Kentucky took office. No his torian or analyst can compute what this true knowle edge has since been worth, ir the desperate days of the sec ond Cuban crisis, for instance, or much earlier, when Khrushchev at Vienna threat ened a big war over Berlin.

Such, then, is the debt owed to Dick Bissell. As he happens to be this reporter's oldest friend, the debt is her acknowledged with pride. Bu every thinking American wil surely wish to say "Thank you and good luck" to this exceptional public servan who is now returning to pri

amply financed, And an all- @ 1963, New York Herald Tribune, Io